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Members of Christ

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By

THE VERY REV.

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With a Foreword by

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TO THE SIXTEEN HUNDRED

BOYS AND GIRLS AND MEN AND WOMEN

whom the writer has been privileged to

prepare and present for

CONFIRMATION

in the years from

1904 to 1945

this book is gratefully dedicated.

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FOREWORD

For several years I have had the opportunity of commending to Church of England people useful little books written by clergy of our Church in Canada. Once more I have the opportunity of commending such a book. People often say that there is little literature suitable for their reading, when they try to learn more of their religion. We have been trying in our Church to do something towards the meeting of that need, by sending out little books on various religious subjects. Here is another book by one of the clergy of our Church. I welcome "Members of Christ", by Dean Elliott. It is a most readable work, full of stories illustrating religious truth, easy to read, and replete with instruction. I hope it will have a great number of readers. We need books like this to help us to understand "the faith of our fathers".

Primate

Chapter I

AT THE FONT

"WHAT is required in Holy Baptism?" asked a Sunday-school teacher. "Please, teacher," came the answer, "water and a baby." And a very good answer, too.

"How do you prepare for Holy Communion?" asked a clergyman; and a bright boy said, "I shine my shoes on a Saturday night and put them near the bed ready for morning." Another excellent answer.

It is in the spirit of such answers that we may, in this little volume, talk over some of the features of our ordinary life in the Church.

When we enter an Anglican or Episcopal church, the first object that we meet is the font. It stands near the door because Holy Baptism is the entrance into Church membership. Sometimes it is said of a theological student, "He is going to enter the Church," meaning, "He is about to be ordained." This is a mistake. He entered the Church when he was baptized. All persons who have been baptized, laymen, as well as clergymen, have entered the Church. All who have been baptized are members of the Church. When

people ask, "What does the Church say?" or, "Why does not the Church do something?" they perhaps think only of the responsibilities of the ordained ministers of the Church. But if they have been themselves baptized, these questioners might begin to reply to their own challenge. Every baptized person shares in the responsibility.

Babies are welcomed at the font to be baptized. Why do we not keep them waiting until they are old enough to understand what it is all about? Because God's interest in a human life begins at the child's babyhood. God's blessings do not wait till we can understand them. Mothers do not wait till their infants can understand; but they love them and feed them and keep them warm. God's blessing is waiting for the tiniest of His children. It is not a question of their qualifications. Compel them to come in. Do not make a select list of those who are to be received into the ark of Christ's Church. Set the font near the door, and open the door as wide as it will go, and say to them all, Come; no matter who you are; come in the name of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

Holy Baptism is a way of bringing little children to Jesus to be blessed, even before they know the first thing about it. The child is not merely a physical creature, like one of the lower animals. This wonderful being who has come into the world is the child of God, with a place in that eternal, spiritual realm which is the kingdom of heaven.

The child is entitled to the love and blessing and grace of God, and we bring the infant to the font to receive those gifts of the Holy Spirit which God is ready to bestow, and that the newcomer may be acknowledged and enrolled.

It is characteristic of the Anglican Church that we stress what God does for us before we claim to have done anything ourselves. God's grace is a gift; we do not have to earn it before we receive it. Then when God's grace is given, we become responsible for the use that we are to make of it. So the Christian life begins with the bestowal of an unearned gift of the Holy Spirit in Baptism. The Baptismal promises, though the words are spoken before the baptizing takes place, refer to the obligations that the child is to fulfil at a future date.

These promises are made on the child's behalf by godparents—two godfathers and a godmother in the case of a boy; two godmothers and a godfather in the case of a girl. The godparents are Church people who themselves are trying to live as they promise the child shall live — renouncing sin and wickedness, believing the Christian faith, and serving God faithfully day by day.

By what right can anyone make such promises for a child without the child's consent? Simply because these are the best promises that can be made; and anything to the contrary would be grievously to the child's detriment. If the child had a banking account, it would indeed be unjust

to make deductions from it; but nobody will object to the paying in of sums which will benefit the child. To promise that the child will do wrong would be a scandalous proceeding; but to promise that the child will do right is simply to pay in to the child's account the first instalment of what is undoubtedly in the child's favour. When years of discretion are reached, the child may throw out of his account what has been placed there to his credit, and may reject the promises, and his action will then be on his own responsibility. But we are so certain, beyond all question, that these are the right promises, and we have such a definite intention of teaching the child so, that we have good hope of the fulfilment of them by the child's own choice when he is old enough to decide for himself. In prayer and faith, by the sacrament of Baptism, we are seeking for the child that grace of God which we trust will lead him later to make the right choice and will give him strength to perform what is promised.

Anyone who is "of riper years", as we say—that is, who is no longer a child but has come to years of discretion—may ask to be baptized if he (or she) has not been baptized before. In this case, the baptismal promises are to be made directly by the candidate, not through godparents. The candidate should therefore receive beforehand enough teaching to ensure that he knows what the promises involve.

In the early days of the Christian Church, those

candidates who were of riper years (as most of them were) used to make their vows in this way: First, they faced the west, where the sun sets, to represent looking towards the realms of darkness; and thus they said, each one, "I renounce thee, Satan, and thy works, and thy pomp and worship;" and then they turned right round, facing the east, the sun-rise. They could not turn to the east unless they turned their backs on the west, as if to imply, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Facing east, they recited the second promise: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ: and in the Holy Ghost."

When, in these days, members of a choir and congregation turn to the east to recite the Creed, this should not be a meaningless ritual. It may be so, if people do not think what they are doing and why they do it. But each one should remember, "I cannot face east unless I turn my back to the west. When I say I believe in God, I must renounce everything that displeases God. I must not try to face two ways at once."

When I was twenty, facing temptations that come strongly at that age, I put the thought into some simple verses. They helped me in the writing of them; so perhaps someone else may be helped if we print them on the next page, for what they are worth. They are not fine poetry, but they record some moments of value in religion.

Tune: *Sandon.*

God, turn my face from darkness to the light,
And keep me brave.
Why should I fear Goliath's bragging might,
And be a slave?
World, flesh, and devil, — we defy their power;
For God's our Strength in every evil hour.

Vainly the courts of sin with revels ring
In mocking night.
Wretched and bitter are the tears they bring
At morning light.
In honest day their promises grow cold.
Men sell their souls for that which is not gold.

Why, then, should evil thoughts my spirit stain,
And soil my mind?
Sin I renounce, and all its baneful train
Is cast behind.
One day of praise Thy hallowed courts within
Is better joy than thousand days of sin.

The peace of God, which none can take away
And none can give,
Shall keep the hearts of those that own Thy sway,
In Thee who live.
In God's glad service shall our souls be free.
We find our joy, our peace, O Christ, in Thee.

Lord, make me worthy of that wondrous peace
While life shall last.
Cleanse Thou my soul and bid its conflicts cease;
Forgive what's past.
Thy hand from every evil sets us free.
Strong Son of God, I rest my soul on Thee.

1903.

We may either develop the animal side of our nature as an end in itself, or we may develop the spiritual side, so that the animal side is subordinated and made the servant of the spirit. Our Saviour came to redeem and to regenerate human nature. Whether in the baptism of those of riper years or in the baptism of young children, we come to our heavenly Father, who made us and loves us; and against any hereditary taint of evil we place our claim upon the grace of God. We come to God in faith and prayer, in a way appointed by our Lord Himself, and we ask that the Holy Ghost may cleanse, bless, sanctify, and inspire the life. We believe that God's grace is given. God keeps His promise, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." There is one saying of our Lord which seems to me to sum up in a single sentence the main fact both in Holy Baptism and in Confirmation: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." There are three or four distinct points in that one verse which will give food for thought.

Immediately before the baptizing, the minister says, "Name this child." This is not a mere formality; still less is it a mere casual inquiry. This is the moment in life when a child receives a Christian name—the name that marks the child as a Christian. We are Christ's, and our names are the constant reminder. "He calleth his own sheep

by name." He says, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Also, immediately after the baptizing, there is the sign of the cross on the forehead. It is an invisible mark, but we should always remember that it is there, like a sentry on guard over our thoughts; teaching us also the right use of shame, which brings a blush to the brow. Shame may be honourable or dishonourable. The mark on our forehead should help us to be ashamed at evil and to blush at sinful thoughts; and also, as Richard Hooker said in the sixteenth century, to be an admonition "to glory in the service of Jesus Christ, and not to hang down our heads as men ashamed thereof, although it procure us reproach and obloquy at the hands of this wretched world."

> "Jesus, and shall it ever be,
> A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
> . . . . . .
> And O may this my glory be,
> That Christ is not ashamed of me."

It is the sign of a cross. If we were to mark our children with the sign of a dollar, that would be something different. The idea is that we go through life, not concerned about how much money we shall make, but about our obedience to Him who said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We are not to be surprised if discipleship entails sacrifice and suffering. We accept a cross, and

shun the enticing garlands of this world, that our foreheads may be kept to be crowned by Christ. We are to banish quickly from our minds the thoughts that God cannot bless.

While the cross is being marked on the brow, "we receive this child into the congregation." We turn from the font to the pews. It is appropriate (though it is not usual) if at this point the congregation is asked to move from the font and take places in the nave, that is, in the body of the church; and then the infant may be carried forward to suggest a further step in the Christian pilgrimage; or the person of riper years may be led by the hand to the pew that he will now regularly occupy as one of the congregation. It would be absurd to think that we receive new arrivals at the ever-open door of the Church of God and baptize them only to show them the door again and say, "Good bye; we will not see you again till you come to be married—or buried." It is very dishonouring to God for anyone to treat the Church in that kind of way. "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock," and we bid him go forward.

In Holy Baptism we are made members of Christ. The word, "members", does not here mean what it has come to mean when we speak of members of the basketball team, or members of the Canadian Club, or of the Kiwanis, or the Rotary Club, or the Burns Society or the Dickens Fellowship, or even the Ministerial Association. In

the case of these institutions, the members are indeed expected to be loyal; but it is still permissible to regard the business as one from which we may resign if we please; the association between the members is somewhat loosely knit. The Church is not merely a kind of club. Clearly we must mean something else when we say, "members of Christ".

"Member" is a Latin word, meaning "a limb". During our Lord's earthly life, His feet carried Him from place to place to reach those whom He would bless; His hands brought comfort and healing; His voice spoke the words of life. At His ascension He did not go further away, but He extended His ministry to reach beyond the limits of Palestine to every part of the world. For this ministry He must use many feet, many hands, many voices; therefore He has taken the Church to be His Body. When we become members of the Church we become limbs of His Body. Through us some part of His work on earth today is to be done. He depends on us.

When we appeal to baptized people to decide for Christ, we do not mean that they are to decide about their relationship to Christ. That relationship is already settled; the challenge is whether they will choose to act as His members should act—whether they will be sleepy or paralyzed members, so that the Body of Christ goes lame so far as they are concerned; or whether they will be awake and alive and quick to hear each whisper of His word and to answer and obey Him, called

as we are by our names. Normally, we do not expect to have to ask our growing children to come and be Christians. They are Christians. As often as they hear their Christian names, they are reminded. They may not only sing, "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there;" but when the roll is called here and now, they are to say, "Lord, here am I; send me," and, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In the early days of the Christian Church, the weeks from Easter to Whitsuntide were the special time of the year for the Baptism of those converts who had only lately heard and accepted the Gospel. The candidates were prepared by careful instruction during the forty days of Lent; and then they were baptized by immersion—plunged beneath the water and raised up from the water—to signify being dead to sin, buried with Christ, and risen with Him to a new life. The most appropriate day was Easter Eve, the anniversary of the day on which our Lord's body lay buried in the tomb before He rose again from the dead. As the numbers of converts increased very much, it was no longer possible for all of them to be baptized on Easter Eve, so the period after Easter was the most usual.

So it happened that during each Easter season most of the Christians were keeping the anniversaries of their Baptism. One may have been baptized the year before, another five years before, another perhaps ten; but in each case the anniversary came round every year shortly after Easter.

This was the origin of a prayer which we always use on the third Sunday after Easter—a very old prayer for all the newly-baptized and also for those who were keeping their baptismal anniversaries. It is a prayer for "all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same."

In early times, each person at Baptism was robed in a white linen dress, typifying the innocency of life to which the Christian is called. This dress was afterwards exchanged for ordinary attire, but it was treasured as a badge or token of the Christian profession. Its whiteness was a mark of holiness, of purity and humility. The whole life should match its spotlessness — holy, harmless, undefiled—a daily dying to sin and living to righteousness, with no unworthy conduct as a blot upon that robe.

We belong to Christ. We do not think of this selfishly. We do not forget the crowds outside who do not know or do not care. If they have been already baptized, we may try to show them what their Baptism means. If they have never been received into the congregation of Christ's flock, we are members of His Body, and He will use us to bring them in.

Chapter II

WHAT TO BELIEVE

ADDRESSING the godparents at the close of the baptism of a child, the minister is directed to say, "Chiefly ye shall provide that he (or she) may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments."

These three are not simply a series of exercises chosen at random. They represent what is vitally necessary to everyone who wishes to go through life wisely and sensibly instead of gropingly like men in the dark. That is to say, it is necessary for each one to know

1. what to believe;
2. how to pray;
3. the difference between right and wrong.

It is impossible to live rightly unless we know what to believe. This is placed first of the three. Someone will say, "It does not matter what you believe so long as you live a good life." But what do we believe about goodness? And how do we believe that we may attain it? If a man is on a journey, he will not say that it does not matter what direction he is taking so long as he keeps moving cheerfully along. When we are on a railway train it is not comfortable or convenient if it is not quite the right one. An aeroplane

travels fast, but if the pilot has lost his bearings he and his passengers are in danger. A ship may be strong to withstand wind and waves, but without a compass and a rudder it will not arrive safely.

We recite the Creed at almost every Service. It is easy to say that this is an empty formality, a mere habit; but, as the charwoman says in *Outward Bound,* "There's no 'arm in 'abits, if they're good 'abits." Like a gleam of sunlight on a cloudy day, so flashes the Creed upon our path to show us where we are. We may have become confused by an elaborate discussion about the universe as "a fortuitous concourse of atoms", and suddenly we are brought back to the realm of commonsense by the words, "I believe in God . . . Maker of heaven and earth." When I read the telegram that told me my youngest brother was killed, I said just that: "I believe in God; *I believe in God.*" It makes all the difference.

Nobody can begin the study of mathematics without clear axioms, such as, "Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another." Anyone who says, "Let us skip that; let us go ahead with a general kind of notion that will work itself out as we go along," will flounder, and will never see the point, and will end by saying, "I don't like mathematics; I prefer tiddledewinks." So frivolous people say, "I'm tired of going to church and saying the Creed and things like that; I like golf." But life is not frivolous. The moment comes when we need solid ground under our feet.

To believe in God is much more than to believe that there is a god of some kind. What kind of God? The answer is found

1. in creation;
2. by revelation;
3. by experience.

The created universe—earth, sun, stars—indicates to any intelligent person that the Creator is great and good, a supreme Architect, a supreme Artist. Can we believe in Him? Can we put our whole trust in Him? What is His relationship to us, His creatures? He has made Himself known in relation to mankind, by revelation, in history, in poetry, by His servants the prophets, and above all, through Jesus Christ. The Christian faith finds its certainty in definite facts—no mere guesswork. Everyone may read, and should read, the New Testament; and students are at liberty to examine it with all the apparatus of a scholarly literary criticism. Here and there a reader may have to proceed slowly before reaching assured conclusions about this or that: but the Church keeps us steady by affirming faith in God, Maker of heaven and earth, our Father revealed to us through Jesus Christ; and the experience of Christians for centuries past ratifies and confirms this faith.

The central fact in the Creed is that Jesus Christ rose again the third day from the dead. Everything hinges on this. Here is something that happened; and, although it was more than nineteen centuries ago, it is relevant to all the

most vital questions in our lives today. It gives assurance of the ultimate victory of righteousness. It is indeed possible, without believing this fact, to have a general idea that it is better to be good than to be bad, better to be kind than to be cruel, better to be truthful than to be a liar, better to be unselfish and self-sacrificing than to be self-seeking and grasping. Yet it is not long since the whole world was thrown into agony because there were in control of events men who did not believe this, men who acted on the supposition that falsehood and treachery are permissible and profitable; that sadistic torturing of their fellow-men is an expression of superiority; that a nation should selfishly extend itself without regard to any rights of other nations; that the men in power may follow the same policy within their own nation; that devilish wickedness is a fine game to play. It is of the utmost importance to find a final answer to all such doctrines.

The Christian sets out to answer by pointing to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ; but if the Christian has no clear conviction about the Resurrection, the answer is not conclusive. The Old Testament had set forth as high a standard of social justice and of personal behaviour as any that the world had known until Jesus came. Jesus fulfilled that standard and went far beyond it. He summed up in His own Person all that was worthiest and best in human ethics. Self-sacrifice and love and service of mankind shone through His earthly life. And then, on Good Friday,

came to Him a shameful death, failure and helplessness, while His enemies triumphed.

So when, today, a man is trying to be good and decent, there comes at times a horrible temptation to think that, after all, he is a fool; that selfishness makes better sense; that hypocrisy pays; that greedy grasping brings dividends; that dishonesty and treachery bring a man to the top. The ideal of being a disciple of Jesus, if it is no more than a vague sentiment without foundation, crumbles when it is put to the test. Men as good as ourselves—apart from the foundation in Jesus—have crumbled. Men in good business positions, honoured by their fellows, have crumbled, because they had no final positive assurance that honesty would win. How can we be sure, if even Jesus Himself did not win? Christ, so pure, so holy, so utterly self-sacrificing—and there is His body tied up in the grave-clothes at the age of thirty-three; and what is the good? Let the women take their spices and shed their tears; and why should I be interested? What faith can I have that anything good is worth while?

But see the grave-clothes lying flat; the stone rolled away; the Magdalene finding Jesus while she wept; Simon Peter pardoned and restored; the disciples gladdened, convinced, commissioned to preach the good tidings. Hear the voice of the risen Lord: "All power is given unto me!"—Why, then, the argument is reversed; the scheme of things ironed out; the doubts put to flight; righteousness proclaimed; and the whole self-

sacrificing offering of life is justified and vindicated. Does not that matter to you and to me, and to all this broken world?

How can we re-build; how can we establish social righteousness, unless the foundations are strong? If might is always stronger than right, there is no security for any plans of justice between man and man. At any hour the forces of atomic bombs may break through all barriers like a tidal wave. But if the Creed is true about the triumph of the risen Christ, then we may declare wholeheartedly, "I believe in God"—the Lord who sitteth above the waterflood, the Lord who remaineth a King for ever.

So the Saviour came to the disciples, when they were shattered in spirit; when they expressed their hopelessness; when they said, "We trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel;" when the task in front of them was so despairing that it was not worthwhile to begin—until all was changed by their recognition of Jesus risen the third day from the dead.

Many good men today are busy with plans about economics, citizenship, international schemes of security, and the rights of man—all well and good indeed; a most necessary task, for which we owe them gratitude, while we pray God for their success. But it is not so good if those who are pre-occupied with the more material aspects of reconstruction forget those basic convictions on which the future must be built. Sentiment may evaporate; tender feelings of

piety may harden into indifference; superstitions may mislead. Then, when simple seeking folk look round for some secure standing-ground, the more intelligent and better-educated persons, who should guide them, may fail them utterly if, under the stress of their immediate concerns, they have forgotten what to believe.

The world cannot be re-built on pep-talks, on ingenious topics chosen to catch the crowd and tickle their ears. We can build nothing safely if men do not know and hold fast by this Creed. Rains will descend and floods come and winds blow and beat upon any building that men can devise. Foolish men build upon sand; but wise men, patiently attending to the foundation of a firm faith in the risen Christ, will so build that, come what may, the structure shall not fall, because it is founded upon a rock. Evil, seeming to triumph, puts all to the test, but Christ came back from the dead to prove that God still rules and reigns; that the resolve to live worthily is not a foolish delusion; that self-sacrifice is not wasted, that Christ's own standard of the perfect life is justified.

Jesus Christ not only rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven. He entered on that glorified, heavenly ministry, which includes His presence with us at any time or place. During the forty days after the first Easter Day, our Lord appeared from time to time to mortal sight, coming and going when doors were shut, breaking through the limitations of our earthly existence. Then, at the Ascension, a cloud resting on the

hill-top received Him out of the sight of the disciples; and when the cloud rose from the earth, He was gone. "He was parted from them and carried up into heaven." The word "up" denotes that passing into the life of a higher dimension.

From what we know of the earth's place in the solar system, and its movement, we do not think of heaven as being a fixed locality in a certain direction from a point in Palestine; but we understand that heaven is attained by entering into a higher state of existence. Doubtless heaven reaches far beyond the bright blue sky, but also it cuts across this earthly plane, and may be "nearer to us than breathing, and closer than hands and feet." We in this world are generally subject to the limitations of the five senses, and many of us seldom or never see what lies beyond. Yet the orbit of the earth touches the infinite, and the infinite reaches to us.

At the Ascension a mode of departure was chosen by our Lord which left certain impressions on the minds of those who beheld it. Henceforward they had a clear understanding that He had gone from them only to be nearer to them. His ministry was now universal, not limited by considerations of time and space. He has not gone immeasurably far away. He has entered into a new relationship to us. The Ascension has brought the heavenly close to us.

Also, the Ascension lifts mankind nearer to heaven. The Ascensiontide prayers in the

Prayer Book emphasize this. We pray that "we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell;" and again we pray that God may "exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before." This does not refer only to what may be our experience after death; but here and now we are invited in heart and mind to rise above the things of earth, to live no longer on the lower levels; to have a daily citizenship in a life that belongs to that higher dimension; so that the everyday things may be regarded as but a part of a far bigger thing. No problem of humanity is beyond the touch of the ascended Lord. There is no corner of human activity where He does not claim His kingship. We are to see the eternal, the spiritual, breaking through into this life at every point. The material world becomes to us a sacrament of the heavenly, revealing itself in common things.

Out of that other world there stepped forth, on to the platform of this life of ours, the divine Son of God: that is the Incarnation. Then we trace the story through to Good Friday, Easter, and the Ascension. The strong Son of God has worked His way through and has opened the door for us to step into the higher state of being. We may remember this when we face the problems of life. We cannot walk through a brick wall; we may say there is no way out; but the Lord Jesus can come and stand in the midst, and He can open a door in a direction that we had not even imagined and invite us to walk straight

through with Him. If only we may escape from the mundane point of view and look from the point of view of eternity, there is no problem that need baffle us so long as we are on the side of God.

If we never take any point of view except that of the visible, physical universe; if we cannot imagine any kind of life in some higher realm, then indeed there must come to us moods of great depression and hopelessness. But the Creed keeps before us a view beyond the present and immediate aspect of life, that we may recognize this life to be continuous with a life beyond death. Here and now we are to live as those whose citizenship is in heaven; and when death comes to us or to our loved ones, we say confidently, "I believe in the Communion of Saints, in the Resurrection of the body, in the life everlasting."

When we say we believe in the resurrection of the body, we declare that we do not believe in ghosts — shadowy disembodied wraiths with no existence worthy of the name. Personality is continuous. This expression of the personality is not dependent on the actual particles, which are never the same from one year to another. "Thou sowest not that body that shall be," says St. Paul. But God gives a body—a real body, with faculties and powers beyond those of the earthly body—a body incorruptible, yet recognizable because it expresses that same personality which has passed unchanged through death.

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." At the time of the ascension our Lord promised His disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." These words are somewhat stronger, more robust, than those of a young friend of mine who has graduated at a University and now writes, "I believe in something much larger than myself. I believe in love and unselfishness, lack of snobbishness, co-operation, forgiveness, etc., but I have no use for the worn-smooth phrases of the Church and its superstitious clinging to old customs."

In my reply I have said, "You will not assume that you have plumbed all the depths and reached the final conclusions about the Creed. You say that you believe in love and unselfishness, lack of snobbishness (by which you mean the Christian virtues of humility and meekness), co-operation, forgiveness, etc. Your use of 'etc.' is perhaps an indication that you are still in process of thinking out what it is that you do believe. These virtues, which you commend, do not spring out of the void. You are still drawing on the store of what has been handed on to you in the Christian tradition; for indeed your enumeration of desirable virtues is an echo of the teaching of St. Paul that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' If you believe in the fruit, do you not believe in that which produces the fruit—the Holy Spirit of God? When you say you have a great faith in something much larger than your-

self, you mean that there is something in you which answers to the call of the Holy Spirit, just as St. Paul said to the Romans, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God'."

Our Lord, by His ascension, has passed into a realm almost entirely hidden from our mortal sight; yet He has gone from us in the flesh only to come nearer to us in the Spirit. St. Paul identifies the Holy Spirit with the Spirit of Christ. So it may happen that when someone today becomes uncertain (for a time, until he has opportunity to study the literary evidences) about the historical value of the Gospels, so that Christ is in a double sense removed from his sight by a cloud that he cannot penetrate, yet even so, our Lord does not leave him comfortless, but comes to him by His Spirit, as He promised; so that a man does not lose faith in love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and all that is best in a man responds, because "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

Indeed, it is not uncommon to find that when a man feels that he is losing faith, he is actually beginning to find faith—not a second-hand faith taken from even the best of parents and teachers, but a faith that is the action of his own spirit, with which the Spirit of God is bearing witness. Yet even so, to disparage the "worn-smooth phrases", hallowed by centuries of use by devout worshippers, is to endanger that "lack of snobbishness"

that my correspondent named as a virtue. You may find phrases more worthy of the high theme (although in fact the phraseology of much modern religious speech is no marked improvement on the dignity of the more archaic language); yet if we follow after that "co-operation" which my young friend commends, with "love and unselfishness", we recall that even after the wonders of Pentecost those who responded to the Spirit were not too snobbish to continue "stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers". Many of those who, you thought, were "superstitiously clinging to old customs" have discovered and clung to a way of communion with God which, in your humbler moments, you may envy, and re-consider, and accept.

For, after all, while we cherish these lovely ideals of various delightful virtues, it is no simple matter to exhibit them in our daily lives. It is not enough to pay them lip-service. We have to pass a very exacting test if those who know us in our everyday surroundings are going to say of us, "How loving! How unselfish! How free from snobbishness! How co-operative! How unfailingly forgiving!" This indeed is what we would like to be; but what we lack is the power. Jesus had said to the disciples, "Tarry in Jerusalem till ye be clothed with power. . . . Ye shall receive power." The Holy Spirit of God offers us an inward power, far beyond our own.

Here is a different kind of letter that has come to me from one who is by no means uneducated: "Nothing short of a miracle has been worked in me. I seem to be a new creature, and to hate the sins I loved before. It is the power of God alone that has turned me inside out, as it were, and given me this new life." This has a ring of conviction about it, which the letter from the university graduate seems to lack—a definiteness, a certainty, a joy; while the other letter, by comparison, seems to be in the earlier stage of a groping, a feeling around, a something not quite happy.

It is a fair question to ask, concerning the more joyous and confident kind of utterance, "Does this sense of inward power last?" Much of the testimony that has come into my hands reached me many years ago, so that there has been time to watch developments over a considerable period. In some cases there have been lapses and disappointments; but on the whole there is abundant proof that life with such people has been a progress, a development, a constant enrichment. But experience has shown that fervour is not enough. There is a kind of fervour which does not encourage humility; and this issues in a tendency to become a solitary kind of Christian, kept apart from the fellowship by a feeling of superiority over the simpler folk who go to church.

The steady, growing Christians—so observation certainly suggests—have been those who have known themselves to be members of a Body; who,

distrusting their own good intentions and resolutions, have sought constant renewal by the Holy Spirit in that sphere of His operation where He is acknowledged and recognized. We have no claim upon God for visions and miraculous outpouring of power if we neglect the normal means by which He works among His people. The New Testament clearly shows that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was spread, and gained its place in the world's history, through those who cared enough about it to make sacrifices for Christ and His Church. The best things of life grow by being shared; and Christ sent His Spirit upon the Church that it might be the home of His disciples and the means whereby He might reach out into all the world in every age.

The *Acts of the Apostles* is a record of the first years of the life of the Christian Church; it is impossible to read it as though it were otherwise. It is also a record of work accomplished by the Holy Spirit of God.

So the young Churchman goes calmly, boldly forward, not ashamed to declare over and over again, "I believe in God, Creator and Father; in Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended; in the Holy Ghost; in the holy Catholick Church (that is, the Church universal, in all climes, through all ages; not merely an independent gathering of those who set up something for themselves); in the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Chapter III

LEARNING TO PRAY

THE second injunction to the godparents after the baptism of a child is that he is to learn the Lord's Prayer; that is, he is to learn to pray. St. Luke's Gospel especially emphasizes our Lord's teaching about prayer, and also our Lord's example in prayer. At His baptism our Lord was praying just before the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended. When great multitudes came together to be healed, He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. Before He called His disciples, He went up into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. The first prediction of His sufferings followed immediately after He had been alone praying. The glory of the Transfiguration came when He went up into a mountain to pray.

Our Lord's teaching on prayer followed on His example. "It came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." It was the custom of Jewish rabbis to sum up their teaching in set prayers; so when Christ's disciples found that He was training them in a new way, they

asked Him to give them a summary that might form the basis of their daily approach to God.

We need not enter here upon an argument as to the reasonableness of prayer. A child does not ask to understand the mechanism of the respiratory organs before drawing breath. Prayer, in spite of all the difficulties in the practice of it, is admittedly a natural instinct of the human race. In the very beginning of human speech, before history begins, we can trace an old word, meaning "Heaven-father". "As young birds open their mouths for food," says Homer, "so all men crave for the gods." Christian prayer is a corollary to a belief in God's Fatherhood revealed in Jesus Christ. If I am Christian enough to say so much as "Our Father", I turn to God, not only as a Friend who will stand by me in rare moments of emergency, but as a daily Confidant of every thought; as the Director of every purpose. The life of prayer is a continuous consecration. It is drawing breath in the fear of the Lord.

The Lord's Prayer, which our Lord now taught His disciples, shows that the first aim in prayer is to fix the mind stedfastly upon God: "When ye pray, say, Our Father." Prayer is converse with God, the expression of our relationship to God as His children. It includes thanksgiving, praise, worship—acts of love and adoration. Child-like love is not the same thing as an easy familiarity. Haste and irreverence ruin prayer. The first petition is, "Hallowed be thy Name."

So fixing our thoughts upon God, we learn

unselfishness in prayer. Our concern is for His will, His kingdom; and it is for these we pray before we pray for ourselves. "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." With every Christian, this prayer, "Thy kingdom come," should in one way or another express an intense longing which never leaves us, nor ever shall leave us until it is fulfilled.

The remaining petitions—for daily bread, for the forgiveness of sin, for deliverance against temptation—are all in the plural. There is no "me" and "my" but only "us" and "our". Prayer must be unselfish. Real intercession means praying for those whose affairs are genuinely on our heart.

The ordinary needs of every day are not forgotten: "Give us day by day our daily bread." There is a Father in heaven—there is One who knows and cares. The story of Elijah and the ravens and the widow's barrel of meal does stand for a fact of experience—we are not left without testimony as to that. The Saviour's feeding of the five thousand does mean something today. Slender resources are strangely multiplied when faith brings them trustfully to the touch of God. The essential fact is: Christ reveals God as our Father. It is the personal relationship that matters, and "Your father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

On the other hand, if we examine carefully our Lord's teaching about bread, we must include two significant facts. Before His ministry began,

He said, in answer to the kind of temptation that comes to harassed and hungry people, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." And again, at the close of His ministry, He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is my Body, which is broken for you." And having said this, He went forth to the cross.

There are two types of Christian experience in this matter. We have met, even in the poorest quarter, the house-wife of unruffled brow, who amidst all toils and uncertainties, can still say, "I never see cause to worry: God always provides somehow." But next door to her, it may be, is one whose brow is scored with lines, and whose eyes speak of patience, long-enduring and undefeated. This one, I am inclined to think, has travelled further on the road with Christ. She has been within the Garden of Gethsemane. Her bread has come to her crushed and broken; her very body has borne bruising. But her soul is not crushed; her spirit is unbroken.

"In the world," said Jesus, "ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Storm and tempest there shall be; but you will not sink. Suffering and persecution are not averted; but "My peace I give unto you." This is God's guarantee. Over and over again our foolish anxiety has been rebuked, as we have found that God had for us some better thing in store, and that whatever has been denied us in the good things of this world has been more than

made up to us in rich experience, such as never can be known by those whose life has been free from care.

It is with deeper knowledge of God's ways that we read on, and after the Lord's Prayer we have the parable of the friend at midnight, and the words, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It all sounds so easy. Some would refer to it as a charming instance of the simplicity of the Gospel. As often understood, it is supposed to mean, Ask for a fine day for tomorrow; for a successful deal in business; for good health, good profits, a good position. It is taken as a kind of universal mascot; a magic key to open any door we choose.

But is is not really quite so simple as that. We are taught to pray, "Thy will be done;" not, "My will be done." When we seek only our own will, we often find that the charm does not work. You pray for health, but the illness drags on. You pray for prosperity, but you still have to struggle. We prayed intensely for a certain boy to come safe home from the war, but he was killed.

On reflection, there may be sound reasons why it is not all quite simple. A fine day tomorrow may be very nice for you, but it may be that rain is needed somewhere. A successful deal in business may be profitable for you, but someone else may be losing on it. A school prize or a scholarship cannot be won except by disappointing those who fail. Even for ourselves a direct answer to

all our prayers would be disastrous. Midas prayed that everything he touched might be turned into gold. The legend says that his prayer was granted; and the very food became golden and metallic; so he starved.

Coming back to what our Lord says, we find certain conditions attached to His promise. Notice, it is a son who asks. "If a son shall ask bread;" a son, not a stranger; not a rebel. So the first question about my prayers is this: What is my relationship to God? Our Lord has told us about a son who ran away from his father. The servants in his father's house had bread enough and to spare; but the son, so long as he refused to behave as a son, found only husks, and was perishing with hunger.

And again, the son asks for reasonable things—for bread, for fish, for an egg. He is not encouraged to ask for a stone, for a serpent, for a scorpion. The son may be deceived by outward appearances. A scorpion coils itself up and looks like an egg; but if your son asks you to put it into his hand, you will refuse. We think we know always what is good, and we ask God to give us this or that. Very often His refusal is because He knows that we have set a false value upon the object of our prayers.

Particularly, however, the special lesson of this part of our Lord's teaching is that we must be in earnest in our prayers. Ask; seek; knock. Keep on knocking; be persistent; be importunate. Prayer must include the exertion of our wills, not

for the fulfilment of our own desires, but for the accomplishment of the will of God.

Our very helplessness drives us to prayer. If we could but reach the level of such close fellowship with God that every act of ours might come under His smile, we should never be party to a wrong thing, but would live selflessly, adventurously, abounding in ungrudging service. Until we reach that ideal, our prayers must include confession of sin. "Forgive us our trespasses." Prayer is bound up with conduct. To tell God everything—our joys and hopes and needs and fears—means telling Him our failures, too; and asking the Father's forgiveness. True contrition is based on strong, deep love, and seeks above all the restoration of a happy, confident relationship with the Father. We know we have grieved Him, yet He knows we love Him still. "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

And then, to be practical, repentance is to be translated into amendment of life. We are to forgive others their trespasses; and we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." If we could learn to pray this with perfect sincerity, we should never make a false step; never deny Him; never hold back anything from His service.

St. Luke does not add the doxology to the Lord's Prayer. In our own use it is sometimes included, sometimes omitted. Yet when there is any doubt, any fear, any disappointment about the answer to our prayers, then we should indeed

look up, and say with confidence, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

After our Baptism we have moved forward from the font to the pews. We have been received into the congregation, and we belong there. We find provided for us in the pew a Prayer Book, perhaps bound together in one volume with the Hymn Book.

To those who have not been brought up in the Church of England, the Prayer Book appears much less familiar than the Hymn Book. For English-speaking people it is provided in the English language. Any congregation which speaks some other tongue is provided with the same Prayer Book translated into the tongue best known to those who are to use it.

Cervantes, in his *Don Quixote*, says, "The great Homer wrote not in Latin, for he was a Greek; and Virgil wrote not in Greek, because he was a Latin. In brief, all the ancient poets wrote in the tongue which they sucked in with their mother's milk, nor did they go forth to seek for strange ones to express the greatness of their conceptions: and, this being so, it should be a reason for the fashion to extend to all nations."

The language of our Lord's first disciples was Aramaic. But Greek was the most widely known tongue of the surrounding peoples; and the Epistles and Gospels were therefore written in Greek. They were also at an early date translated into Syriac, as this language was that of

many Christians at that time. Later, as the Church extended her borders, the majority of Christian worshippers were people who used Latin. Church Services were therefore recited in that language. The accepted principle was that the Church should adopt whatever language was best understood by her members in various places and at various times. There is nothing specially sacred about Latin. The Roman Church has continued to insist on Latin as the one tongue for all Church Services, even for congregations who do not understand it. The Anglican Church keeps to the original principle, which we believe to be more in keeping with the relationship between a heavenly Father and His children. So English-speaking people are provided with a Prayer Book in English.

The next fact that may be noticed in the Anglican Prayer Book is the very large proportion of it which is derived from Holy Scripture. Thirty-three pages near the beginning are devoted to the Table of Lessons, sometimes called the Lectionary, which provides for the reading of four passages from the Bible on each day, week days and Sundays, throughout the year. Another section of the book, extending over almost two hundred pages, consists entirely of selections from the Epistles and the Gospels with short prayers appropriate to them. In yet another section, we find the Psalms printed in full, occupying very nearly another two hundred pages, with directions that the entire Psalter shall be said or sung each

month. Thus in a volume of 750 pages, we have accounted for 430, all strictly Scriptural.

Then we may examine those pages that are the most frequently used, headed, "Morning Prayer", and "Evening Prayer". Here we notice several passages from St. Luke's Gospel which are to be used in daily worship; and we begin to perceive, even at first glance, that there could scarcely be forms of prayer and worship more strictly Scriptural than those of the Anglican Church. This will surprise those who have supposed that the most Scripturally minded Christians are those who regularly engage in acts of worship led by a minister who composes the public prayers as he goes along without using any prayer book. I have on my shelves a book of 777 pages consisting entirely of Scriptural quotations to endorse, as the title page says, "such parts of the Book of Common Prayer, administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, as are not direct extracts from the Holy Scriptures." Thus our Prayer Book, while more than half of it is directly taken from the Bible, may claim that all the remaining part of it is Scriptural in origin, in doctrine, and to a great extent in its phraseology.

Turning now to look at some of the prayers in this book, we find that most of them are called "Collects". The accent in this word is on the first syllable, by the way. The origin of the name is uncertain; but we see that a Collect is a short, neat sort of a prayer. If we look more carefully

we find that each Collect follows a careful form of structure. Dr. Wickham Legge pointed out more than sixty years ago, in a letter to *The Guardian* (21 May, 1884), that even this very structure is on a Scriptural model. He referred particularly to the prayer of the eleven apostles before the co-opting of St. Matthias, after the death of Judas, and divided it into its four parts:

Invocation: Thou, Lord,

Basis for the Petition (a relative clause attached to the Invocation): Who knowest the hearts of all men;

The Petition: Shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

Purpose of the Petition: that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by trangression fell.

We do not suggest that we must slavishly adhere to the very form of this prayer every time that we speak to God. As we have just remarked about the use of Latin, we judge these matters by what is in keeping with the relationship between a heavenly Father and His children. But in the Anglican Church we do hold that our approach to God should be always reverent, even in simple private speech; and we consider that in the public prayers, led by one specially appointed, there should be, for the sake of reverence, a certain dignity and worthiness even in the manner of phrasing our prayers. The Collects do not all follow the same pattern with such rigid exactness as to make them merely formal and unnatural.

The patterns vary enough to allow for sincerity in the thought. But here, for instance, is one that follows the most usual sequence, and it is the same arrangement that Dr. Legge pointed out:

Invocation: O God,

Basis for the Petition (a relative clause attached to the Invocation): Who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding:

The Petition: Pour into our hearts such love toward thee,

Purpose of the Petition: that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire.

The beauty of it is that, even while we are examining the form, the thought carries our minds along and uplifts our hearts. We do not feel that we should surrender such a lovely way of addressing our holy and loving God in order to place on the minister the responsibility of finding new words of his own week by week. Our Lord has indeed said, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions," but not all repetitions are vain, for our Master and Teacher has Himself given us the Lord's Prayer, and He did not mean that we were never to repeat that. Indeed the warning is, as He told us, that we are not to think that we shall be the more acceptably heard for our much speaking; and these short Collects help us to avoid that mistake.

Some say that we would show a truer spirit if

we cared nothing about form. Let them say that to a painter or sculptor, and what would he answer? The artist spends years of his life in the study of form that he may the better express that inward beauty which is to enkindle our finer faculties. The form without the spirit is indeed mere formality and formalism; but a thoughtless neglect of form is poor evidence of a devoted and dedicated spirit. We recognize this fact when we address those of our fellowmen to whom we wish to show respect. Good manners towards God are a necessary feature of reverence.

Dr. William Bright has well described the Prayer Book Collects as "prayers which say so much in saying so little; which address the Most High with such adoring awe, and utter man's needs with such profound pathos, yet with such a calm intensity . . . which are perpetually insisting on the absolute necessity of Grace, the Fatherly tenderness of God, the might of the all-prevailing Name; which are never weak, never diluted, never drawling, never ill-arranged, never a provocation to listlessness; which exhibit an exquisite skill of antitheses, and a rhythmical harmony which the ear is loth to lose."

The Collect already quoted is used on the sixth Sunday after Trinity. It is one of several Collects which the Church has continually preserved since the fifth century. It is a prayer that we may love God above all things. Such love is God's gift, poured into our hearts; and if we surrender to

it, there await us blessings which exceed all our desires. Such a Collect helps us to pray for the right things, the most valuable and important things of all. How easily, in our undirected and untutored prayers, we ask for the wrong things. Our Lord has taught us to ask first that God's Name be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will done; and, for ourselves, daily bread, forgiveness of sins, and help against temptation. By our Collects we are encouraged so to pray. In our next Chapter we shall consider some typical Collects in more detail, to illustrate the way in which these short prayers are based on right principles. The form of the prayers would avail us little if we were not assured that the spirit and the meaning are such as are acceptable to God.

Chapter IV

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

"GRANT to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will."

This valuable Collect, which we have in an English translation from the Latin, has stood for fifteen centuries. It is a prayer that we may think and do what is right. That seems a simple idea; yet it takes us to the roots of the moral order of the world. If the universe were a vast machine, in which processes of evolution worked themselves out mechanically, then there would be no question of moral right or wrong. If we were not free in thought and action, if we were the sport of fate, then again there would be no question of right or wrong. If we were on a level with the beasts, obeying our instincts, with no moral sense, there would be no question of right or wrong. If our actions were the inevitable product of our heredity, or of our environment, or of both combined, then again we would have no responsibility in choosing right or wrong.

These various considerations go deep into our philosophy of life; yet by offering this simple

prayer we declare that all such doubts are already laid to rest. We acknowledge that the world of humanity is not part of an immense machine; that we are not the sport of fate, not footballs to be kicked about the field, nor chessman nor checkers on a board; that we are not mere animals, not brutes; not justified in making our ancestors responsible for what we think and do. We are children of God; and to God we are responsible; and to God we make our prayer that we may think and do what is right.

It is a big step in life when we consciously and deliberately make up our minds that we want to do what is right; that this is to be the decisive factor in all our actions, not whether a thing is pleasurable or comfortable; not whether it is profitable, or smart, or in any way to our worldly advantage; but first of all whether it is right.

If we are to do what is right, we must be right in our thinking. Do not imagine that a person does a wrong thing on a sudden impulse. The temptation may come suddenly; but what we shall do in that unexpected crisis depends on what we have been thinking; especially on what we have been in the habit of thinking. And the habit depends on what goes on still deeper down—the spirit in which we live. So our prayer is, "Grant to us, Lord, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful." What is the essential spirit of our lives? What kind of people are we, really, deep down? The answer to that question depends on our relationship to God. This prayer goes on to

say, "we cannot do anything that is good without thee." The sense of what is good and right is implanted in us by God who made us.

We are so created that we are moved to revere and love what is good. Suppose that some young person who has never had religious instruction goes to see a moving picture, or reads a novel or a short story in a magazine, and finds there some portrayal of an unselfish action, some quiet heroism, some generous deed, then, if the young person's soul has not already been surrendered to some corruption, the instinct is awakened towards what is good and noble and right, because God has so made us that we respond to the highest when we see it. We Christians, who have been instructed in the Gospel, are accustomed to say, very rightly, that we know God because He is revealed to us in Jesus Christ: but remember that the wonderful Gospel story would not so convince us unless there were that within us which responds. It has been so from our earliest childhood. It is God's creative work in us that causes that response; so that the story of Jesus is not merely some interesting event of nineteen hundred and more years ago; but becomes to us a proof of the God-given spirit within us.

Yet, as we have said, we are not machines. This God-given spirit is not a compulsion to drive us, as mechanical puppets are driven. We are children of God, and we are free in thought and action. It is possible to quench the spirit within us by

yielding to temptations and making wrong choices again and again. How are we to avoid that possibility? By turning constantly to God, who made us to be of right spirit and who is ready at all times to renew a right spirit within us. So this prayer concludes: "that we, who cannot do anything that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will;" *"by thee;"* and God will never fail us if we are sincere and earnest in offering such a prayer as this.

Again we remark, it is a very simple prayer, but it embodies a profound philosophy. More, it presents to us a strong challenge. Do we really and truly repent of our sins and intend to lead a new life? Do we want to do what is right? Shall we be careful to think what is right? Are we living in the spirit of right thoughts and actions? We know we are frequently tempted; we know the dangers. Are we therefore constantly praying, "God help us to do right; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts; Renew a right spirit within us"?

This is just the first step. It is by no means the end of the matter. There is no limit to the vast sweep of this prayer in relation to the great tasks that lie before us. In the conflict of war we had no doubt about what was right. It is right to resist aggression; it is right to liberate those who are under oppression; it is right to dethrone tyrants and to defeat evildoers. But now we have need to pray for God's direction in all that concerns the post-war world. Instead of problems

of battle we have problems of economics and politics, problems of international relationships, and at present the picture is vague and uncertain: yet the future of humanity will depend on decisions that are made, in peace no less than in war. Here is our prayer: God help us to do what is right: God guide us to think rightly: God give us the right spirit in all these great matters through and through.

Another Collect which prays that we may think and do what is right is appointed for use on Rogation Sunday, the fifth Sunday after Easter:

"O Lord, from whom all good things do come: Grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same."

Notice the phrase, "by thy merciful guiding". The Collects have the thought of Guidance running through them like a thread. Over and over again we pray for guidance. One of the best known Collects is,

"O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts."

So also on Whitsunday we pray that by the Holy Spirit "we may have a right judgment in all things."

Another persistent thought in the Collects is Grace. We pray that we may not only perceive

and know what things we ought to do, but "also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same." We pray for "grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light." We say, "Grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed;" and, "Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent (i.e. go before) us and follow us;" and, "Lord, we beseech thee pour thy grace into our hearts."

Anglicans have been misunderstood as to their use of the expression, "means of grace", referring to the Sacraments. Certainly the Sacraments are given to us to be means of grace; but these quotations from the Collects show that our Church does not suggest that God's grace comes at no other times and in no other ways. Most of the Collects are for use at Holy Communion; but we carry these prayers with us from the Sacrament into our Morning and Evening Prayers day by day. The grace of God is, like the manna, new from heaven every morning—not a commodity, carefully stored up by God, to be rationed and doled out in cautious instalments. The grace of God comes like the showers, not drizzling, but pouring. "Pour thy grace into our hearts." God never stints His gifts. He comes in the fulness of His power, in the glory of His triumphant Personality.

One of the loveliest of the Collects comes immediately after the opening Lord's Prayer in the Holy Communion:

"Almighty God,
unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hid:
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the
inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily
magnify thy holy Name."

This Collect, being used at every Holy Communion, is called the "Constant Collect", to distinguish it from the "Variable Collects" which change each Sunday or fast-day or festival. The Collect is peculiarly English, as it is not found in the Liturgy of the Church of Rome. Yet it was written (in Latin) centuries before the Reformation. (It is a mistake to suppose that the Church of England had no Liturgy of its own before the Reformation.) This collect is found in two places in the Missal of Sarum (Salisbury) and also in the Use of York. It was used in Exeter Cathedral in the eighth century, and is found in the Sacramentary of Alcuin, who was born at York in 735.

The opening words may have been suggested by the ancient Jewish sacrifices, when the victim to be offered had to be without spot or blemish and was therefore closely examined by the eye of the Momoscopus—the priest whose special business it was to look for any flaw or fault. Before the close of the Holy Communion we say, "Here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves. . . ." So at the beginning of the Service we pray the

divine Momoscopus to look into our hearts. The silver vessels for the altar are most carefully cleaned every Saturday. We would hate to think we were using anything unclean. How much more important, as our Lord told the Pharisees, that our hearts should be spotless. So we read in Psalm 139: "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me and examine my thoughts; look well if there be any wicked way in me."

The next words of the Collect, "all desires known", would be more exactly translated, "to whom every wish speaks". So we are examined not only by the eye of God, but also by His ear, which can hear even the unwhispered thoughts. It is our unuttered desires that control our characters. "From whom no secrets are hid": this is not entirely a condemnation. It is an appeal to the One who perfectly understands. Our hidden motives are sometimes favourable, sometimes unfavourable; so that our actions are sometimes better than our motives, yet sometimes our motives are better than our actions appear to be. In either case God knows and fully understands. We pray Him to cleanse, not only our outward appearances of character, but the very thoughts of our hearts and to do so by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes the action of the Spirit must be as that of a rushing mighty wind; but for those who devoutly, frequently, faithfully and regularly come before God with this prayer, the action of the

Spirit is more likely to be like that of the damsel in Bunyan's story, who, instead of sweeping violently and making the dust fly till the pilgrim was almost choked, came and sprinkled water in the room, "the which when she had done, it was swept and cleansed with pleasure."

The aim and object of the cleansing is not merely that we may feel more comfortable and at ease, but "that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name."

This is how our Church, like a wise mother, teaches us the right approach to the act of worship. A psychiatrist has remarked that his most difficult patients are those who have attended some so-called "places of worship" where all true worship is obscured by indulgence in self-centred emotion. The idea of our Prayer Book is far more wholesome. We are not to be asking what people like, but what is worthy. We cannot offer God less than our best. Opinions indeed differ about this or that, for we can only partly apprehend what is most pleasing to God; but let us never for a moment forget that the aim and object of all worship is addressed to God, "that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy Name."

Loving God is not a pious sentiment only. It has moral force, and includes loving God's will. We look away from self to God. We confess our need of cleansing that we may be made worthy to join with angels and archangels and all the

company of heaven to laud and magnify His holy Name. "We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee"—not for our nice comfortable feelings, but "for thy great glory."

In most Anglican Sunday schools it used to be the custom for the children to learn the Collect for the week by heart. If this is no longer being done, I would plead for its revival; and also that Church people of all ages should learn a number of Collects so that these may come readily to mind, to be used not only during the appointed week each year, but as occasion requires in our private lives. We do not fully value these wonderful prayers until we can say them without the book, just as we should also know by heart passages of the Psalms and other great verses of Holy Scripture. Thus we may know how to pray. The right words, prompted by the Holy Spirit, will come to our lips, to save us from temptation, to guide us to what is right, to support us in all adversities, to shape our lives nobly and worthily as becomes the children of God, members of Christ, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

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Chapter V

RIGHT AND WRONG

WE have been learning to pray that we may think and do what is right. The Ten Commandments are given us as directions to show us the difference between right and wrong. The first four commandments tell us our duty to God—the one, true, holy, loving God.

First, the one God: we are to have no other gods before Him. I am "to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, with all my strength".

"No man can serve two masters." God is to come absolutely first in all our plans and hopes and purposes; we are to "seek first the kingdom of God". The first question about any matter is to be, Is it right?

If it is not right, then all questions as to whether it will be useful or convenient or profitable must be ruled out. "What wilt Thou have me to do?"—that is the important question, and by the answer to it our whole lives must be controlled.

The second commandment tells us our duty to the true God; namely, to have no false gods. There are idols worshipped today in Christian countries as shamelessly as the Israelites danced

about the golden calf. There is a golden god of wealth, when men make the pursuit of riches the first object in their lives. There is the fleeting, will-o'-the-wisp goddess, called pleasure. There is the mirror of self before which men and women bow down and worship—self-seeking, self-conceit, self-righteousness. All such idols draw us away from God. If we are trying to serve such false gods and also at the same time to serve the true God, we are being pulled two ways; we lack harmony in our being; our life needs to be unified by renouncing the false gods. We cannot steer well if we allow some back-seat passenger to distract our will and control our direction.

Two men were discussing whether human nature could be changed. One said, "If you try to change in a hurry, it all goes flop afterwards." The other replied, "You know why it all goes flop; because there is just one little idol that you won't give up, and that brings all the others back again."

So we have learned to sing,

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee."

The third commandment tells us our duty to the holy God; namely, never to take His Name in vain. We do not need to be reminded how grievously this commandment is broken by those who introduce the name of God or of our Saviour profanely

into their speech in careless or wanton oaths. But also there are some who have never used an "objectionable expression", who may yet be breaking the third commandment. We take the Name of God upon our lips in prayer, in hymns and psalms and every act of worship. Is this ever "in vain"—that is, in emptiness of heart? Does God's Name ever pass our lips while our heart is set on other things? My duty to God is "to worship him, to give him thanks, to call upon him, to honour his holy Name and his word"; and I break this commandment if I am not reverent, attentive, and devoted, in all times of prayer and worship. Moreover, such times are "vain" (empty) if we do not try to serve Him "not only with our lips, but in our lives". It is an essential part of our worship that we are "to serve him truly all the days"—Sundays and week days—of our life. We are to prove outside the church building that we really mean what we say inside.

The fourth commandment tells us our duty to the loving God: namely, to remember the Sabbath day. It is out of love for us that God has ordained one day a week for rest. If we would only believe it, we are not fitted for seven days' consecutive work or strenuous pleasure. God, who made us, has taught us for our own good that one day in seven is to be used for refreshment of body, mind, and soul. But that is not all. Our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week; and indeed, if you trace back the history of the

Lord's day to the beginning, you will find in it an indisputable proof of the fact of the Resurrection: for its beginning can be found nowhere else but on the first Easter Day, the very day when something must have happened which led the disciples to observe this day from that time onwards.

The Resurrection is the crowning proof of God's love. It is God's love that awakens an answering love in us, so that we must show our love as a child expresses love for a father, by giving Him for His own a part of what He has Himself given us. So we offer Him "the Lord's day". It is not a matter of exact rules and prohibitions, but a question of the spirit in which we offer it—not a matter for argument, but a question of love. Do we really love Him?—that is all. If we do, then other questions answer themselves. Neglect of worship is because of failure in loving. Children of God will give our risen Lord a real token of whole-hearted love, not grudgingly, but with the simplicity of a child.

The cynic will ask, "What good is that to God? How can the Maker of heaven and earth care whether human beings offer prayers and praises to Him?" We reply by asking, How can the controller of a great business, employing thousands of men, care about the offering of some little thing out of the dime store from his four-year-old son? It is not good to be cynical.

Those who are members of Christ are thereby

members one of another. Our love to God is expressed not only in worship, but in love for our neighbours. This is the meaning of that great word, charity, as St. Paul would have us understand it.

Charity begins at home. The fifth commandment tells us our duty towards father and mother. In olden days, for the Hebrews, there was a promise attached to this: "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Circumstances have changed, but the old words are very apt for those young folk who look forward to what they call "a home of their own". They may interpret the commandment, Do what is right by the old home first, and God's blessing will rest on the new home when it comes. There will be little blessing on married life unless honour and reverence, love and devotion, have been bestowed on the old home first. "A good son makes the best husband." It is a poor prospect for anyone to marry a person who has neglected to show common gratitude to father and mother, to whom is owed, under God, the very gift of life; and by whose countless acts of self-sacrifice life has been nurtured and sustained. When at length parents go from this life, then one either hears the upbraidings of conscience in the knowledge that it is now too late for repentance; or, on the other hand, experiences the sublime peace, rising even to ecstacy, in the whisper of an undying love and the assurance of an unbroken communion. God

give you the joy of such love for mother and father that death can never separate you from them. Then you will know the meaning of "the communion of saints".

The sixth commandment carries us from the centre of charity to its circumference—from those neighbours who are nearest to those who are farthest off. I do not mean farthest off in point of distance, but farthest off in sympathies and natural affection. We learn now our duty towards our enemies. Our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, expressed this duty in its highest terms when He said, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." Pray for them—that is the great secret. You cannot hate those for whom you are genuinely praying. Prayer breaks down barriers. I know there are difficult problems. More than one person has asked, "How can I love so-and-so? Why, he won't even speak to me; and if I make any advances towards reconciliation, I am repulsed at once." Yes; but you can pray for him; his enmity cannot hinder prayer. And, believe me, if you so pray daily, sooner or later you will find some proof of a new relationship. That new relationship may take many years to develop, but by the ministry of constant prayer its growth is sure. Meanwhile your prayer helps you also in your resolve "to hurt nobody by word nor deed . . . to bear no malice nor hatred". If you are faithful in this, you need not be kept back in your spiritual life. But if you have left undone

anything that is due on your part—any confession or restitution—then remember our Lord's clear direction: "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

The seventh commandment brings us back to the sanctities of the home, and teaches our duty towards husband or wife—present or future, as the case may be. A young man's duty to his future wife begins long before he knows who that wife will be; it begins right away from childhood. It is the duty of personal purity of thought, word, and deed. The same is true of a young woman's duty to her future husband.

This commandment has been regarded by some novelists and other writers as old-fashioned and out-of-date. We have heard much about the dangers of repression; but the truth is that for five persons who are miserable and neurotic through repressing their passions, there are fifty who are miserable and neurotic through repressing their consciences; while there are five hundred who are unconscious of repression because the grace of God has carried them above the grosser temptations.

It is a delusion to suppose that experiments along forbidden paths bring new chances of happiness. Old disappointments and failures, unless they are overcome by trust in the love and power of God, repeat themselves under new conditions. It often happens that divorce does not lead to

satisfaction in a new marriage, but to a further divorce.

The physical penalties of doing wrong, we are told, may be evaded. This is doubtful; and there is no doubt about the penalty to mind and soul. Power of concentrated work, peace, and poise, joy in prayer—these are sacrificed when self-respect is gone. On the other hand, the dignity, the glory, the buoyant joy of youth; the hope of a happy and honourable marriage and of parenthood in its sacred pride; the sense of clean and clear-eyed self-respect; the chivalry of mutual respect between young man and maiden; the power to influence others for good—these are not to be lightly thrown away.

To find out the true meaning of love between man and woman we want to win freedom from selfishness, freedom from the violence of uncontrolled passion, freedom to be very patient and very kind. Love must express itself in sacrifice; it is essentially a giving—with reverence and with patience. Anything less than this is mere flirtation.

We have to share in the re-building of a broken world. We can build nothing securely if we break down home and family life. God has given us our places in a world-wide society; and when we ask what is right and what is wrong, we must not think selfishly. Life in a community cannot go on unless its rules tend towards its continuation by the birth and education of children and by

the handing on to the next generation the highest ideals of personal behaviour that God has revealed.

The eighth commandment teaches us our duty to our neighbour's property. Not only am I "to keep my hands from picking and stealing," but I am "to be true and just in all my dealings". I am not to seek my own advantage at my neighbour's expense.

Betting and gambling cut at the very root of that charity which means loving our neighbours as ourselves. I am not here referring to gambling merely in the sense of taking risks or being adventurous. But the gambling which is covetousness, such that I cannot win unless my neighbour loses: what charity can there be in that? Betting and gambling are wrong because you cannot pray for God's blessing on your bets. You cannot decently ask God to make the other people lose so that you can have their money. If you do try to pray, there stands the Lord Jesus by your side, saying, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." If you go on, and let this thing spoil your prayers, then you are, for the time being, so far separated from God's protection that an evil power is able to come in between you and God, an uncanny spirit which begins to influence you perhaps only slightly at first, causing you to act differently from the bearing of a normal and well-balanced being. You find instances of this again and again among gamblers. An unhealthy kind of excitement

arises which is a warning of moral danger. It is the mischief of the desire to get something for nothing, to take out of the common stock more than you put in, a deep-down desire to escape from the fair exchange of an honest working life.

Betting and gambling not only hinder us from loving God wholeheartedly; they prevent us from being good neighbours. They make us responsible for our neighbour's failure and loss. Many gamblers deny that they are on the road to loss and ruin themselves; they say they know how to take care of themselves—and some of them, financially speaking, take care of themselves far too well. But you cannot tell what this will mean to your neighbour. There was a hostess who gave up card-playing for money in her house, because, as she said after a certain experience, "I do not invite my friends to my house in order to send them off crying to bed."

There are pitiable instances of youngsters who left home innocent, and have either had their hard-earned pay filched from them at the gaming-tables, or else have had created in them a sort of itch for gain which spoils their prayers and cuts them off from a sense of the comforting Presence of God. It is bad enough for a man's habits to spoil his own prayers, but it is a terrible blot upon the soul to spoil the prayers of an innocent youth. Our Saviour said, "Whosoever putteth a stumbling-block in the way of one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that

a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Some people salve their consciences by saying, "I only gamble when it is for the hospitals." What a terrible confession, that they can well afford to subscribe to help to heal the sick, but that they have to be wheedled and cajoled into giving by an appeal to selfish motives. If they do win a house or a car, how can they enjoy it when they see sufferers lying in hospital wards, and say to themselves, "This is the place from which I took out many hundreds of times more than I ever put in"? If we are genuine in saying we bought the ticket in a spirit of compassion, there is only one way to prove it if we win, and that is to hand the whole of the value of the prize to the good cause for which we profess to care and for which we want to keep on praying.

Betting and gambling cannot be reconciled with the spirit of Christian self-sacrifice—the religion of the cross. Once I enter on this attack on my neighbour's property, other limits of respect for that property tend to be broken down one by one. "Picking and stealing" follow in countless instances. It is no excuse to plead that in the business world the gambling principle is in some quarters freely admitted. Our commercial life, generally speaking, needs bracing up. Am I seeking my neighbour's disadvantage for my own profit? That is a test question. An honest answer to it would revolutionize not only our

speculating, but a considerable proportion of ordinary buying and selling.

The ninth commandment teaches our duty towards our neighbour's character.

> "Who steals my purse steals trash;
> But he who filches from me my good name
> Robs me of that which not enricheth him,
> And leaves me poor indeed."

"False witness" refers not only to the law courts; it includes all the thoughtless gossip and heartless innuendoes that make up so large a proportion of modern conversation. It may be just a nod, or a shake of the head, or a sentence that breaks off in the middle—and somebody's reputation is injured in consequence. Here surely is a matter in which to remember to "do as you would be done by". Think of the pain it is to you when someone has misinterpreted you; think of the grief of some scandal concerning you, which you cannot stop because you never come near discovering its exact origin: and make it your resolve that you will never again be consciously a party to the infliction of such pain and grief upon another. Remember also that this is a sin for which it is particularly difficult ever to make reparation. If you steal your neighbour's property, you may possibly, upon your repentance, be able to restore to him the full value of what you took: but if by a careless or malicious word you send into circulation some evil opinion of him, then—

though you repent ever so earnestly—you may for ever be powerless to undo the mischief you have done. Pray constantly, therefore, in the words of the Psalmist: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep thou the door of my lips." And above all, cultivate by God's grace that spirit of perfect love that "thinketh no evil". Place the best, not the worst, construction upon the actions of others. Remember how much you yourself need a charitable judgment. Then you will be less often tempted to let your tongue speak falsely and cruelly of your neighbour.

The tenth commandment has reference to the commandments that have gone before in defining my duty towards my neighbour. It is a reminder that all sins against charity have their origin in the region of thought and mind and will. "Thou shalt not covet" is the prohibition of the very desire to wrong another. This has been specially emphasized by our Lord Himself. In the Sermon on the Mount He has taught us that even an angry thought is a sin against the sixth commandment, and an impure wish a sin against the seventh. So also the eighth commandment means more than "keeping my hands from picking and stealing"; it means I am "not to covet nor desire other men's goods". The ninth commandment not only bids me "keep my tongue from evil-speaking, lying and slandering", but "to bear no malice nor hatred in my heart". When the heart is right, the hands and the tongue may be trusted

to follow its dictates. So we learn, in conclusion, that we are not concerned merely with the details of a code of law. We are followers in its fulness of the code of love. We are guided, not by the letter, but by the spirit. We are here, not to fulfil the minimum of our duty, but to offer our utmost of willing, loving, obedient service to the glory of God.

The ten commandments give us no more than elementary principles, and the highest code of Christian ethics goes far beyond them. But at least let the life of Canada be built on no less a standard. If every citizen will acknowledge the one, true, holy, loving God; if every home is built on the principles of the fifth and seventh commandments, and every business is conducted in strict obedience to the eighth; if the spirit of the sixth and ninth and the tenth permeates all our relationships; then we shall have at least the beginning of a strong foundation for our national life.

Chapter VI

HOW TO REPENT

ONCE, when I asked, "Why do we say, 'Lighten our darkness'?" a little girl answered, "Because a man might pop out of the cupboard." We do not always allow for the distresses of an imaginative child.

Another time I was asking, "When you know you have done wrong, is there Anyone you should tell?" and the reply came, "You might tell your auntie." Auntie must have been a very special kind of person.

Another answer was one that I am sure our Lord must have loved. I said, "Simon Peter was a very good man; but was he *always* quite good?"

"Please, sir, *nearly* always!"

Now we come to a question which grown-up people have asked us: "Why do Anglicans call themselves (in the General Confession) 'miserable offenders', and (in the Litany) 'miserable sinners'? Would it not be better to avoid these phrases in public worship, and indeed to drop the idea generally? Why be miserable?"

Certainly I can testify that in India I could actually pick out the Christians from the non-Christians, especially among the children, by their

happy smiling faces. In Canada, in the United States of America, and in England, it is possible at Eastertide to distinguish the deeply peaceful expressions of those who have prepared for Easter by keeping Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday; yet the Lenten Services are profoundly penitential.

The joy of the true Christian is not a superficial glee. It is a peace that the world cannot give, and cannot take away. To find it, and to keep it, the Church leads us down into the valley, which proves to be the best route to the mountain-top.

We may illustrate this by looking at the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel, of the eleventh Sunday after Trinity. The Collect begins, "O God, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity". We might have thought that God's power was exhibited most marvellously in the glories of the sunrise, or in the terrors of an earthquake, or in the revolving of the planets, or in putting down tyrants and adjusting empires. But God's power is greatest when He is dealing with the most stubborn obstacle; and there is nothing so baffling as sin.

There is no sense in going about saying "Cheerio!" as though everything were all right, when it is not all right, especially if the trouble is in ourselves. In the Epistle which follows this Collect we have words of St. Paul, a truly great man. Though he seems to have been somewhat insignificant in appearance, he had a marvellous

power. Yet he never could forget that once he had fought on the wrong side in God's battle; and so here—even when he is about to tell us of the glory of the resurrection——he says, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am. . . . I laboured . . . yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." No doubt it was this abiding recollection of his sin, and so of God's grace, that was a great part of the secret of his power. We need this attitude if we are to be right in our approach to God; and we need it if we are to carry any weight with our fellowmen, or to help others in their daily life.

The Gospel for the same day tells us of two men who went up into the temple to pray; and you can see which of them was right in his way of speaking to God. The Pharisee was not like the common folk; especially not like the sinful ones. He did not call himself a miserable sinner. He was altogether too pleased with himself; and God, we see, was not impressed.

God is much more concerned with this other man, who boasts of nothing, but says simply, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Then we see them going each man to his own house afterwards—the one man looking smug and self-satisfied; and the other, without knowing it, with a strange forgiven look on his face, holy and at peace, so that people turn round to look at him after he has passed,

wondering what it is about him that seems so far above the sordidness of this world.

After all, it is not difficult to see why the self-satisfied man must miss the blessing that God has to give. You can never reach the top of a mountain so long as you stand on the roof of your own house. You must climb down before you can climb up. God cannot pour His blessings into a bucket that is already full. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said Christ; that is, blessed are they who in spiritual things are not satisfied. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness;" I cannot hunger and thirst if I have no sense of need. No man knows what righteousness means who comes into God's presence with a claim of his own to it. "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety-and-nine who need no repentance."

There may perhaps be no great specks of dirt on the lens of your telescope, but your own breath, if it is allowed to form a film over the glass, will shut out the view. There may be numberless petty faults that we may be committing every day, and they may be hiding God from us, because we never bother about them to repent of them.

Our Prayer Book deals with this problem in a sane and experienced way. There is no extravagant emotionalism or unreal excitement in the call to repentance. Some emotion there must be; but instead of artificially stirring our emotions

in the hope of leading us to God, the Prayer Book directs us first to God, that He may deal with our emotions.

Repentance includes self-examination, contrition, confession, and amendment. In less technical language, the penitent must see his sins, hate his sins, tell God his sins, and give up his sins. To the honest penitent God has promised the forgiveness of sins.

First comes self-examination—to see what the sins are, and how they appear in the sight of God. So the first thing is the recollection of God; for self-examination must not be by the easy standard of the world. A man may take stock of himself in a careless, ready kind of way, and it is easy to be satisfied with the result in comparison with others who are worse. But the standard of self-examination must be as nearly as possible the standard of final judgment, the standard of God, "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid". It is when we see God as He is that we see ourselves as we really are.

Repentance, therefore, begins with a vision of God. It was when Isaiah saw the Lord "high and lifted up" that he knew himself to be "a man of unclean lips". It was when Simon Peter beheld the glory of Jesus Christ in the boat that he cried, "I am a sinful man." The beginning of the prodigal's repentance was the recollection of his father. As he gazed out across the desert, which

was a picture of his own wasted life, there rose up beyond the horizon a vision of that home where the hired servants had bread enough and to spare, and this remembrance of his father's love and care brought him a vision of himself: "I perish with hunger." Such self-examination teaches a man his soul's need.

The second step is contrition. Contrition is a godly sorrow for sin; sorrow for having grieved God. This is not the same thing as self-pity. There is a selfish sorrow on account of the consequences of sin, its penalties and disgrace. The regret of disillusionment is not in itself a step of repentance.

Contrition is hatred of sin in itself. Hatred of sin springs from love of God. Contrition is defined as "love convicted of having wounded the Beloved."

When Judas went out and hanged himself, his remorse did not lead him to repentance. Contrast the story of Simon Peter, a disciple who had sinned grievously against his Master by denying Him in the midst of His enemies. It seemed as though all the love had gone out of his heart, but when the Lord turned and looked on Peter, the disciple's love returned in full flood. He went out and wept bitterly, not merely for grief at being discovered; not for any harm that had come to himself; but for the sin against One he dearly loved. Afterwards, when the risen Lord appeared to the seven boatmen by the lake, the thrice repeated

question was one concerning love: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And in spite of all that had happened, the penitent could still plead, "Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." His sorrow for sin was a stream breaking forth from the deep well of his love. That is contrition. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Under the on-rush of that flood of contrition, the obstacles of pride and vain-glory and self-confidence are completely carried away, and you have the attitude of humble submission, the readiness to come to the Father and to say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee."

Hence, the next step is confession. The prodigal resolved upon this step when he said, "I will arise and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned." Confession gives honesty to repentance. Just as a child, when in fault, cannot take his seat at table next to his father until he has acknowledged the barrier between them, so the sinner cannot return to prayer and thanksgiving and communion while the fact of sin stands unconfessed. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves;" but "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There has been much unfortunate controversy as to the method of confession. Confession may

be made secretly, when the penitent is alone with God. There are recesses in men's hearts which no human reach can fathom. There are wounds that shrink from every human touch. There are thoughts, emotions, fears, desires, which can never be analyzed by reason. So strangely composite we are, so swayed by varying moods, that a single course of action may appear in twenty different lights, even to ourselves; and only God can tell what motive made us choose it. If the sinner has told God all, kept nothing back, cloaked nothing over, excused nothing, then he may be assured that God forgives him, though no human voice be heard to speak God's message to his soul.

It may help him, in the Services of the Church, and especially in Holy Communion, to join in the words of the general Confession together with the other worshippers, and to regard the pronouncing of the Absolution as a direct authoritative message from God. But it may happen that even then, in some cases, a man is still wretched under the heavy sense of sin, and cannot even yet be assured that God has forgiven him. Perhaps he still feels himself to be a hypocrite as he walks abroad among his fellowmen; his conscience is still unquiet, and he cannot decide what more to do to break away from the bondage of his sin.

Now here comes in a very precious fact as to God's mercy. God not only forgives him, but He wants the sinner to be assured of that forgiveness. He has "given power and commandment to His

ministers to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." If, then, there is any man who, by the means thus so far set forth, "cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel," he is invited to come to some "discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with spiritual counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."

And now there is yet a fourth step—amendment, the giving up of sin. Repentance is not a mere emotion. Emotion there must be indeed, if the heart is stirred deeply; but feelings must be translated into action. Repentance is a definite course that must be followed with resolution and determination.

There has been much discussion of the psychological features of repentance. This may be valuable, so long as we remember that psychology is not religion. Psychology is subject to religion, not religion to psychology. Psychology can deal only superficially with these great events of the soul. There is, for instance, a certain kind of science which may interest itself in the phenomenon of the coursing of the blood through the arteries which produces a flush upon the cheek, but the man who studies the physiological mechanism will surely acknowledge that he is dealing only

with superficialities, and unless he can say something about the sense of shame which produces the blush, and whether that shame is unto God or unto self, his investigation, however interesting, hardly touches the fringe of the matter. Psychology indeed goes further, and examines the processes of the mind; but religion alone recognizes the truth that conversion is an act of God, the response to which must be a direct, definite, conscious act of the human will. This response will include those four elements of penitence which I have enumerated.

There has also been a good deal of discussion as to the suddenness of conversion. On the one hand, there are those who maintain that every mature Christian must have experienced a moment of sudden conversion. On the other hand, there are some who look with suspicion upon any case of sudden conversion, the results of which, they say, are not likely to be permanent.

"Sudden" conversion may be compared to "sudden" marriage. The wedding of two persons should have been preceded by wooing, courtship, and innumerable little delicacies, leading up to the moment at which they make their marriage vows, and this surely is a dramatic crisis in their lives. So with conversion: at one moment a man does not see the light, at another his soul is illumined. No doubt that light has been pursuing him for years. There has been endless conscious or unconscious preparation, perhaps a season

during which he has been "kicking against the pricks". But when after long knocking the door is at last opened, this is a definite action, taking place at a definite moment.

It is useful by all means to study the process which prepares for such a moment; but it should not be suggested that preachers must no longer stand up before the people and declare that God requires a definite decision, and that God's gift is available to the hand that is stretched out for it. Conversion, while it is God's work in the soul, involves an act of appreciation of the divine claim and of obedience to the divine call. An immortal soul stands at the cross-roads. There must be brought about a conscious choice—right, not wrong; good, not evil. The ministry of conversion requires our best endeavours, both in preaching and in our personal dealings. What is called "a simple Gospel sermon" demands as careful thought as any work that we undertake. Above all, this ministry must be rooted in prayer. Prayer is the most potent force towards achieving a change of heart and life in those to whom we are sent. Thus every good Christian may share, and ought to share, in this ministry, praying definitely for the conversion for those for whom Christ died. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Chapter VII

SACRAMENTAL POWER

ANYONE who has reached the stage of spiritual experience that we have been describing, and has not been already confirmed, should certainly ask to be prepared for Confirmation. Others, perhaps not yet more than children, who are just beginning to be conscious of temptation and seek strength to live worthily, should join a Confirmation class. Confirmation, following on a thorough preparatory course, is a vital factor in the Anglican or Episcopal system, of inestimable value. Treasure which should be garnered into the household of God is apt to dwindle or to disappear if we treat the earnest enquirer in any off-hand way, or merely emotionally, or hurriedly or carelessly. Centuries of experience in the care of souls support our conviction that in Confirmation a decisive step is taken, a decisive gift of God is bestowed.

In the eighth chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles* we are told how Philip (a deacon, not himself an apostle) went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them; and when they believed Philip, they were baptized. "Now when the apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that

Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

That was a Confirmation. Certainly it is Scriptural. But more than that. We do not arrive at Confirmation today only by taking our Bibles and reading this, and saying, "Now that is good; it says this in the Bible, so we will do this." The point is that from the day of the apostles until today Confirmation has been continuously an ordinance of the Christian Church. Confirmation has behind it the authority of Scripture, of history, of the unbroken practice of the Church. There is strong reason to believe that Confirmation was a fulfilment of instruction given to the apostles by our Lord Himself.

The word Con*firm*ation means strengthening. A thing is strong when it is *firm*. It is associated with the word Com*fort*er, referring to the Holy Ghost. A *fort* is something strong. The Holy Ghost is the Source of power. When you say, "I want to be confirmed," you mean, "I want to be strengthened."

And that is just what we need. We want to be good; we want to please God; we want to be worthy members of Christ; and we go along nicely up to a point. Then we discover that our

need is for power, strength—strength of character, spiritual strength.

Here is a child who wants to be physically strong, so games and exercises are provided to increase bodily health and well-being. The child also wants to be strong mentally, with good intelligence; and so there is a school curriculum of reading, writing, arithmetic, languages, mathematics, science, history. But most important of all is strength of character, to become a good man or a good woman, to live as a child of God. So you say, "I want to be confirmed."

The idea is most clearly expressed in the prayer by the Bishop immediately before the laying on of hands. This Collect begins with a reference to Holy Baptism, because Baptism comes before Confirmation. There is also a reference to the forgiveness of sins: "and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins." You do not come to Confirmation to receive just at that moment the forgiveness of sins. God is ready to forgive you your sins first, and then, when you are forgiven, you want strength to go on to a better way of living than before. So the Collect says, "Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter."

Then follows at once the laying on of hands, as in the days of the apostles: they "prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

We believe that God is the same now as He was in the lifetime of Peter and John; that the Holy Ghost can and will do for Christ's family today what He did for those first Samaritan disciples.

We do not need to be told that all this might be perverted into a meaningless superstition—an unspiritual expectation of a magic touch, without any real significance for intelligently critical people. But we are not silly ignorant folk who do not know what is what. Look at the matter sensibly: The candidates are prepared. After weeks of instruction in Christian truth, they do not come forward as blind heathen. They have been challenged, not only about their understanding, but about their sincerity; about their decision to renounce the devil and all his works, to believe in God, and obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments. They are not dead wood; they are living and responsive children of God. Moreover, they have been praying; their ministers and others have been praying for them for many weeks past. The Bishop, as we have just seen, prays for them; and he is not alone in this, for the whole congregation is praying. This is the family of God. God is present, and He hears and answers prayer. The laying on of hands is the outward and visible sign of that which is intensely spiritual and real and alive. We believe, as sensible and intelligent and instructed Christians, when all these prayers have been summed

up in that great final prayer, "Strengthen them, we beseech thee, O Lord, with the Holy Ghost the Comforter (the Strengthener)," that as they then, and thus, receive the laying on of hands, it is true for them as for the Samaritans or for any others down through the centuries—they receive the Holy Ghost.

Having moved forward, so to speak, from the font to the pews, and from the pews to the entrance to the chancel, where Confirmation is administered, the newly-confirmed are invited to take an early opportunity to advance through the chancel to the rail at which they receive the Holy Communion—probably on the next Sunday morning.

There is nothing hasty about this approach. Each time we draw near we are reminded of our preparatory steps, as we enter at the west door, linger in the pews, come reverently towards the chancel, and onward—all the way with our backs towards the west and our faces to the dawn. We have been prepared by Baptism, by instruction and fellowship, by Confirmation. Preparatory also is the first part of the Service, known as the Ante-Communion. After the Lord's Prayer follows the Constant Collect: "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open . . ." there can be no pretence here, no camouflage; "cleanse the thoughts of our hearts," so that everything that may hinder us may be removed; "that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy Name." We must be made ready to worship God

in spirit and in truth. The approach is gradual, painstaking, unhurried, reverent.

Then follow Commandments, Collect, Epistle, Gospel, Creed; we have already mentioned these in previous chapters. Next is the Offertory. This is not a name for the money given in collections. Printers of church accounts mistakenly put "offertories . . ." and then so many dollars and cents. The word in the accounts should be "offerings", which may be indeed part of an Offertory, but only part. The bread and the wine are presented at the Offertory, set apart for the most sacred use; and the money is no casual gratuity, but a token before God that all that we have is His. In the prayer that follows we humbly beseech God most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto His Divine Majesty.

After this prayer it is usual to turn over some pages of the Prayer Book, containing three exhortations of considerable length, as these are not often read aloud. But if you have not heard them read, you should certainly make an opportunity to read them quietly and thoughtfully for yourself. In the American book they are printed at the end of the service. Here we are taught "to consider the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof;" and we are invited to search our consciences that we "may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast . . . and be received as worthy partakers."

But what is "the way and means thereto"? The needful preparation is that which we outlined in our last chapter:

1. "To examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments" *(self-examination)*;
2. "to bewail your own sinfulness" *(contrition)*;
3. "to *confess* yourselves to Almighty God,
4. "with full purpose of *amendment* of life"—and this includes reconciliation, with readiness "to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers."

Granted full sincerity in these things, we are ready to respond to the gracious words of invitation: "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you" —that means you and me; "and are in love and charity with your neighbours;" here comes in the reconciliation, the laying aside of grudges and resentments, forgiving others because of the wonder of God's forgiveness; "and intend to lead a new life"—yes, indeed, by God's grace. Then "draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort;" again "comfort" means strengthening, which is what we need, again and again and again—new strength, new grace, new power, as we go on from week to week.

But first, "make your humble confession to Almighty God". In the solemn and heart-searching words of the Confession we lay before God all the sins that God has shown us by the light of the Holy Spirit in our self-examination, and for which we are

truly sorry; the sins which, if we had not repented, would have kept us from Communion, kept us from God. But now the glorious message of forgiveness awaits us, the solemn pronouncement in the name of Jesus Christ, by His authority, that our sins are pardoned and we are delivered, and that He confirms and strengthens us in all goodness. The Comfortable Words tell of God's grace and love: "I will refresh you;" "So God loved the world;" "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" "He is the propitiation for our sins." The joy of the glad tidings uplifts us; we cannot help but lift up our hearts unto the Lord; we give thanks, for it is meet and right so to do.

The thanksgiving that follows is not from human hearts alone, for "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." "Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven"—millions of them, crowding round—"we laud and magnify thy glorious Name." It is the vision of Isaiah, the Lord high and lifted up, His train filling the temple; the seraphim crying one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The vision of God!

The vision of God again leads to the vision of self: "We do not presume . . . we are not worthy." This lovely prayer is called the prayer of humble access. Our unworthiness is balanced by God's mercy: "BUT THOU art the same Lord." So we are brought to the very heart and centre of this

great Sacrament, in the prayer of consecration, and the receiving.

We must ever keep in mind that behind the consecration and the receiving there stand two great facts:

1. Jesus died;
2. Jesus lives.

We set forth, by a dramatic action instituted by our Lord Himself, the fact that God, of His tender mercy, gave His only Son to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption, and that there was made (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. His Body was broken; His Blood was shed.

This is the great and wonderful answer to those who hesitate to approach the Sacrament because they do not feel good enough. Some who are more or less familiar with the Scriptures, and who are sincere and honest, are kept away because they misunderstand what St. Paul said in the verse, "Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." It is a curious fact that the right application of the words depends on a small point of grammar. St. Paul did not here use an adjective; he used an adverb. He did not say that we must not dare to come *unworthy;* but that we must not dare to come *unworthily,* that is, in an unworthy manner. This makes all the difference. We deliberately say that we do come *un-*

worthy; we do not presume to come trusting in our own righteousness. But to come *unworthily* is, according to our Lord's teaching, to come with pride and self-satisfaction, like that of the Pharisee in the temple. The right and worthy manner is to come in lowliness of mind, trusting in God's manifold and great mercies, pleading this: that Jesus died.

It would be unreasonable to refuse a rug or a coat because I am too cold, or to decline bread and meat because I am too hungry, or to stay away from Holy Communion because I know how much I need it. We come, not because we set ourselves up to be better than others, but because we intend to be better than we have been. I knew two Lancashire boys, one of whom said to the other, "Come to Communion." "Nay, lad," was the answer, "I'm not fit." "Why, then," said the first boy, "come and get fit." So we come to Christ for cleansing, because "He died that we might be forgiven; He died to make us good." This is the first of the two great truths that stand behind the Holy Communion. "As often as ye eat this bread," said St. Paul, "and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." We set forth that fact before heaven and earth.

Yet also the second great truth must never be forgotten by those who would think rightly about Holy Communion. *Jesus lives.* We do not come to a dead Christ. The memorial is not of one who is departed, but of Him who is in the midst. In this

respect it may be compared to a wedding ring, which is, in a sense, a memorial. The hoop of gold is given, not because the bridegroom is leaving his bride and wishes to be remembered when he is gone. It is a pledge and a token as if to say, "This is to be a sign to you that I am with you always; that I will never leave you nor forsake you; a memorial of our love, that I will be true to you, and you will be true to me." If we are asked about the Real Presence, we can at least say that we hold no such doctrine as the Real Absence. "Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face." It is a real Communion with our Blessed Lord. As the communicants kneel at the rail, we think of our Saviour saying, as He certainly does to each one who comes in penitent faith, "I come, now, to you—and to you—and to you."

The supreme moment, when you partake, is the moment when above all you open your heart to receive your Saviour as an indwelling Guest. Christ lives, and is truly present. He comes to you; He fills your life. The new strength you experience is the strength of renewed communion with the ever-living and ever-present Christ. He is yours; "Feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving."

Again the Lord's Prayer: we join our prayers with those of the living Christ. We desire our heavenly Father to accept "our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving". Eucharist means thanksgiving and it must be the praise, not only of the lips, but

of the whole life: "Praise the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me." Our sacrifice of praise is not complete until "we offer and present . . . ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice."

Again we join with the holy angels in the music of heaven: "Glory be to God on high . . . We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee."

Then in the stillness, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" comes deep down into your heart and mind to keep you "in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ". The blessing of God is upon you. Still kneeling, you fear to break the spell; but it is no illusion that vanishes with the utterance. You go forth comforted, strengthened; knowing that Christ dwells in you, and remains within you unless you wilfully drive Him forth.

"And when you leave the silence of that happy meeting-place,
You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face."

"The image of the Master." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify"—not you, but "your Father who is in heaven." The quality of your developing character will show that you have been with Jesus. And then the great revival will have begun; for those around you will marvel at what is come to pass, and will seek presently to taste and see how gracious the Lord is.

Chapter VIII

THE IDEAL OF THE CHURCH

SO WE arrive at the practical issue, here in this present life, of our membership in the Church of God; viewing this life in the light of eternity, and dedicated to God's service here, while we hold fellowship with saints in the life beyond.

We belong to the Body of Christ, the agency through which He has promised to work in dealing with the manifold perplexities of this troubled world. We are to share in the divine power which is able to bring about the conversion of mankind, to supply that ideal and that impetus without which political endeavour is futile; to foster that holiness of life, that sympathy with our fellows, that grip of the facts, that all-hoping, all-serving love, by which the miracle of regenerating mankind can be accomplished.

The part of any one individual Christian may be but a lowly one; yet it may be a Christ-like, healing touch, the opening of blind eyes and the unstopping of deaf ears. Here is an extract from a letter: "A man here found that ridicule of the Church had become part and parcel of the general gossip of the place where he worked. One day, coming across a group of men, he joined them in discussion.

Presently the usual sneer was heard, one man asking what was the good of the parsons, the Church, or religion. The Churchman answered, 'Go no further than me,' and he told them of the years of happiness in his home since he had found Christ, and how the Church and the clergy had helped him all along. And what do you suppose his workmates answered to that?—Nothing."

It seems a very simple piece of service for Christ, very unobtrusive. But if every Churchman would do at least as much as that, the work of the kingdom of God would move forward more quickly than it does.

Do not let it be taken for granted, in your workshop or place of business, or on the farm, that the day of Jesus Christ has gone by. Do not let it be supposed that His Church is a vain survival of a superstitious past. Do not let it be assumed that gambling, intemperance and sexual sin are necessary evils, or that there is no great harm in a fling into the kind of world where the manhood of the nation is being sapped. Bear your witness of what the Lord Jesus has done for you; what the Church means in your practical life; what is the secret of strength against temptation.

The deeper down you go into the heart of human life, the more certainly you will find that men's souls are hungering for just that kind of witness which you can give. Many are restless, unsatisfied, conscious of "an aching void the world can never fill". Let them know that you have

found what does satisfy; and pray daily for the grace of God to enable you to prove the truth of your words in your daily living; and God will not fail you. Some at least will believe you, and will come in due course to bear their testimony: "Now we believe; not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

It is not easy for members of Christ in the world of today. It never was easy. You have to listen to all the incessant blether about the failure of the Church, and perhaps you wonder whether you may be on a hopeless quest. Do not be fretful and impatient because everything has not been smashed down before us like the walls of Jericho at the sound of the trumpets. Do not join the ranks of the complaining and the rebellious when any loss or disappointment comes, or when we are the victims of injustice. Our Lord has taught us, not that our road would be a flaming success, but that we are to deny ourselves and go His way, and leave the results to Him. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," He said, "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

From the very beginning of the human race, God has been infinitely patient. When He created the world, He did it by word of command. I do not say He did it in a week; but He did it, so to speak, without taking the sun and the moon into His confidence. But when He came to redeem man, it was a work of persuasion, by the wooing

of man's wayward heart. There were the lessons of long ages of history; there were pleading psalms; there were warnings, promises, appeals, from the prophets; then there was the coming of the Son of God from heaven.

The Saviour came most lovingly and most patiently to bring blessings to all who would receive Him. But even in His beloved Galilee much of His work was a failure. In His own home town of Nazareth He was not a success. In Chorazin and Bethsaida and in Capernaum He was not a success. In the "holy city" of Jerusalem, He was not a success. "Ye will not come unto me," He said, "that ye might have life." "How often would I have gathered you, and ye would not." Yet the same Jesus is the risen, ascended, glorified King of kings. How patient He was, enduring the cross, despising the shame, looking for the joy that was set before Him. He would not break the free will of indifferent or obstinate men. Yet His kingdom cannot fail.

We should, therefore, be of good cheer, even when voices are heard lamenting what is freely called the failure of the Church. Some have become so mesmerised by the phrase that they use it as thoughtlessly as if they were muttering it in their sleep. You find yourself surrounded by people who reckon everything by success. Those who thus worship success are utterly mystified when they come across such words as those of Lord Kelvin,

whom they would consider one of the most successful of scientists. At Glasgow in 1896, Lord Kelvin said, "One word characterizes the most strenuous of the efforts for the advancement of science that I have made perseveringly for fifty-five years: that word is failure." Those who thus gloriously fail win the true success.

So our Lord Himself acknowledged, both in Capernaum and in Jerusalem, as He might have said also in His own city, Nazareth, that He had not been a success. But what mattered was, He had been faithful; He had been true; He had said what had to be said to those who refused His voice of warning; and in a most wonderful way He had been able (not thinking of Himself in relation to His own feelings, but only as Saviour) to go on helping those who wanted help, blessing them, so that while He failed with those who thought they knew better than He did, He was able to build His Church on the few simple plain people whose souls responded to His truth, His power of the Spirit, His love. So, "at that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." He had found some people at least who would trust Him; and best of all, through all discouragement and failure, the Father who is Lord of heaven and earth is to be utterly and completely trusted. Whatever is good

in His sight is right, and safe, and cannot ultimately fail.

So our Lord, on the one hand, went on speaking the plain truth, the words of warning; He went on exposing the falseness of character of those who devoted their lives to what was mean and unworthy, no matter how much they hated Him for saying it; and also on the other hand He turned to those who were seeking truth and comfort and strength for the hard tasks of life and gave them the tenderest words of hope and love and confidence and cheer. "Come unto me," He went on to say, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Unto me, and I will give you"—the words show that He was more than man, although He went about as a Man among men. In the verse just before this, He makes it clear that He speaks with divine authority: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father;" and so He is able to say, "Come unto me;" — He is the Saviour. In Him God revealed Himself, that He might speak to men with a human voice, touch them with human hands; yet with the power of heaven behind His words and behind His touch. Because He had worked as a carpenter in the shop, making the yokes for the overburdened oxen, because He had Himself been wearied and disappointed, He could look into men's faces and see the marks of overstrain. The wrong kind of yoke is a heavy burden. "Come to me," He said; "take *my* yoke."

That is why the minister of the Sacraments wears a stole over his shoulders. It is to remind us all of the yoke of Christ.

We are not to be mere hot house plants. Some have tried to make the Christian life easier by withdrawing from the world altogether. But no: "The Word became flesh." The Incarnation is Christ's proof that the burning, blazing witness of the Christian life is to be set in the midst of the actual world as it is.

Our own individual redemption is part of the scheme, but the aim of our redemption is that we may serve. We are redeemed, each one of us, that we may belong to something larger than ourselves. To save our own souls is immensely important, but it is not enough. We may lose our souls simply because we have never cared for anything else except saving them.

Christ's aim is a Kingdom, and we are here to help it on. We must not shut ourselves up. None of men's problems, none of the difficulties that tax the patience of humanity, can be counted as outside the sphere of Christianity. There is not a corner anywhere from which Christ is to be excluded; not a soul anywhere who is not to be offered a share in all that Christ has to give. There is no common concern, no detail of human affairs, but what Christ shows us His relationship to it. So we are to be His saints, not by going off into a trance, but by being what God wants us to be amidst the real surroundings of every day, in the

family, in the street, in the shop, on the farm, at the office.

When we come up against impossible conditions, we must not shrink. We must set to work to alter the conditions. The snow storm is there, but we must not wait till the summer. Out we must go, like the good King Wenceslas,

> "Through the rude wind's wild lament,
> And the bitter weather,"

carrying meat and drink and the pine-logs, facing the cruel frost, until the earth grows warm again under our steps. We must have faith in our message, faith to believe that conditions may be changed; faith to believe in the power of love against force, if only we live the message as well as preach it. So we may sweep a great pathway along which the hosts of the Lord may come—a pathway for all peoples to march towards the Kingdom, a pathway for the King Himself to come and lead them. We know that the springtime is coming, but we are not to rest idle meanwhile; we are to prepare the earth for its coming, manfully grappling with the problems of the present, bold in reliance on the Incarnate God, strong in the unconquerable hope of men who know in whom they have believed.

We must look on the world with humble eyes, knowing that we ourselves have been forgiven much. The secret of real sympathy with those who much need our love is to remember that, but for

the grace of God, we belong to their level. We can have faith in people, because we have faith in the love that has redeemed us. We are to believe that people are worth winning, and to believe that God can win them.

"The King of Glory shall come in." He came to Jerusalem, meek and lowly and riding upon an ass; and while some shouted "Hosanna," Jerusalem was waiting to revile Him and spit on Him and scourge Him and nail Him to a cross. He comes, not like some Roman general returning in triumph, leading his captives bound to his chariot; not like a Nazi to drive victims to the concentration camps with their hideous atrocities; but with purple robe worn in mockery, His sceptre a reed, and His crown one that hurt and brought blood to His brow. The King of Glory claims entrance, but He does not force His way in. Not by the mighty battering of His strong right arm, but by the gentle knocking of His pierced hand, as One who pleads, "Behold, I stand at the door," so He comes in.

When we care enough for Christ and His Church to be ready and content to trust Him and follow Him, then things begin to happen. When we say, "Because I believe in Jesus and in the way that He chose and appointed, I will gladly surrender myself to His command," then there comes the power of the Spirit, and the gates begin to lift up their heads, perhaps in a kind of surprised delight, while there advances along the way, still meek and long-suffering, still bearing the marks

of the wounds, yet beautiful and strong and altogether lovely, the King of Glory.

He stands by the sick bed; He stands by the poor and the worried; He stands by tempted folk who want to do better. He stands by Indian and Eskimo. He is with our missionaries in India and in China. He comes at the moment when people have at last discovered that there is no way without Him. When folk have almost lost heart, they hear Him, knocking; not smashing through the panels, but appealing for the doors to open. When He comes in, when tired and disappointed lives see here their Saviour, there is the glory and the splendour. The world does not always see it; but there are people in towns and villages all over the world who have welcomed the King of Glory to come in and transform disappointment and disillusionment into hope and faith, death into life.

And we are members of Christ. We are His hands and His feet and His voice. The privilege of it! God does not want our patronising occasional attendance. He offers us scope for all that we have in us to give. Be faithful; be faithful—faithful unto death.

We are signed with the sign of the cross in token that we shall fight manfully under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil. We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. We are still in the area of conflict, and sometimes we fear defeat. Yet the decisive battle has been fought; victory is assured. We can

lose only if we forsake the banner. The Conqueror has mounted in triumph, while all heaven, with a voice like the noise of many waters, ascribes victory to the Lamb. He says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

The Ascension was not only the close and climax of our Lord's sojourn on earth; it was His entry on a heavenly ministry which operates now in this world. As every year the high priest, putting off his golden robes, had been wont to go forth in robes of pure linen and offer in the presence of the people the atoning sacrifice, so our Lord laid aside the golden robes of His heavenly majesty, and taking on Him the spotless robe of a sinless humanity He offered on Calvary in the presence of the people the one perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Then at His ascension He passed within the veil that hides from us the vision of heaven, and there He pleads the sacrifice. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." He stands as the living proof and the continual witness that mankind is not a failure; "for he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

When of old the Jewish high priest was presenting the sacrifice within the veil, the people outside knew that presently he would appear again, clad once more in his golden robes. In the golden robes of His heavenly majesty the Lord of Glory comes to bless His completed Church. We belong to

the Church militant; we are one with the Church triumphant.

Here is the Collect of All Saints' Day, one of the loveliest festivals of the Church:

"O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord: Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Tune: Regent Square.

God the Father, who hast brought us
To this glad Thanksgiving Day,
For Thy temple Thou hast wrought us,
Living stones Thy Church to stay.
By the precious blood that bought us,
Cast us not unused away.

Jesus Christ, the One foundation,
Firm we stand if built on Thee.
Help us raise in every nation
Walls of strong humanity,
Resting on Thy sure salvation,
Towering to eternity.

Holy Spirit, by whose thunder
Came the cloven tongues of fire,
Shatter all that keeps asunder
Those Thou wouldst as one inspire.
Speed the day, Lord; work the wonder,
When one Church we stand entire.

When the works of sin are driven
Down to hell's consuming blaze,
When our God Himself has given
His perfection to our days,
Then the Church, complete in heaven,
Shall re-echo to His praise.

Sing, O Church, sing Alleluia;
All ye ransomed people, sing.
Hosts on high, sing Alleluia;
Heav'n and earth, your praises bring.
Comes the kingdom; Alleluia;
Alleluia to our King.

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